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Rising Costs, Safety Improvements Lead to Housing-Rate Increase

Feb-10-2006

The Eastern Illinois University Board of Trustees on Friday approved an increase in room and board rates for students living in EIU housing in the 2006-2007 school year, but the rates are still among the lowest in the state.

The increase is needed to help cover expected increases in utilities and food costs, as well as to fund residence hall improvements, including the sprinkler-system installation project already in progress, university officials said.

Students living in EIU's residence halls and Greek Court will see increases of \$206 to \$232 per semester (a 7.5 percent increase), depending on the chosen meal plan. Room and board rates will range from \$2,955 per semester for a 7 Plus Meal Option to \$3,330 for the 15 Plus Meal Option.

"We certainly believe that we will be providing the best value in the state of Illinois," said Dan Nadler, EIU vice president for student affairs.

The four meal-plan options have been enhanced to provide more flexibility for students. Each permits students a specified number of dining center meals per week, plus a specified number of "dining dollars" which can be used to buy additional meals in any dining center; make purchases at Eastern's Food Court, Java B & B and Panther Pantry in the University Union and at the university's two residence hall convenience centers; and provide dining center meals to guests.

Students living in University Apartments will also see an increase in the rates they pay. The plan calls for increases of between \$11 and \$12 per month (an approximate 3 percent increase), with rent ranging from \$364 to \$409 a month, depending on the type of apartment being rented (one-bedroom, efficiency or super efficiency).

The proposed rate increases won't affect students living in University Court, a university-owned apartment complex for sophomores, juniors, seniors and graduate students. Rates there will continue to range from \$2,210 to \$2,824 per semester.

According to Mark Hudson, director of Housing at EIU, rental rates for University Court apartments do not include the cost of electricity or water. Leaving rates the same as they are this school year will provide students some financial relief as they deal with anticipated hikes in utilities costs on their own.

Nadler reported that students are very satisfied with on-campus housing, and, in fact, a number of students who are living off-campus now have indicated an interest in moving back to campus.

EIU President Lou Hencken said that the university has "a tremendous amount of housing" for a school of its size, and the rooms have been filled almost to capacity.

"We have a very, very excellent housing system," Hencken said, giving it a large share of the credit for the university's high graduation and retention rates.

In other business, the board approved naming Old Main's central foyer "Cougill Foyer" to express the university's appreciation for a \$500,000 gift from Max and Mary Cougill of Charleston.

The Cougills' donation will allow the university to complete much-needed renovations of the first-floor hallways of Old Main, officially named the Livingston C. Lord Administration Building. Old Main, EIU's signature building, is the campus's oldest structure, having been completed in 1899.

Also Friday, the board approved a three-year labor agreement providing an across-the-board annual raise of 3 percent for members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 981 Service Unit, which represents approximately 175 employees at EIU.

The pay increases are effective Sept. 15, 2005; Sept. 15, 2006; and Sept. 15, 2007. In addition, shift pay will increase by 5 cents per hour in each year of the contract.

The estimated cost of the agreement to the university is \$482,370 over the three-year period ending Sept. 14, 2008.